



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Tajikistan

Planning Year: 2006

Executive Committee Summary

Country Operation Plan 2006 : TAJIKISTAN

(Drafted March 2005¹)

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

In 2006 UNHCR Tajikistan will continue its durable solutions strategy to identify and promote solutions for the remaining refugee caseload in the country through resettlement and local integration, as well as the integration of Tajik refugee returnees. The Office will promote a sustainable and efficient protection/asylum regime by supporting the capacity of the Government and NGOs, participating in regional border management initiatives as well as promote Tajikistan's accession to international instruments on statelessness, namely, the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The backbone of this work in 2006 will be the results of the 'Protection Gaps Analysis' process for Tajikistan.

The overall political and security situation in the country remained stable in 2005, and as such UNHCR announced before the meeting of the Standing Committee on 9 March 2005, its intention to declare the cessation of refugee status of Tajik refugees, provided a number of parameters were met towards the end of 2005, beginning of 2006. In close coordination with UNHCR offices in neighbouring countries where there are still Tajik refugees, it has been considered that the number of those returning to Tajikistan following the declaration of the cessation clause should not be too numerous as most of those who wished to return have already done so and others are for the most part settled in the countries of asylum and many belong to the predominant ethnic groups in the countries of asylum. UNHCR Tajikistan will continue to have a reintegration programme for Tajik refugees who may decide to return to the country following the cessation clause, in the same way that it has continued to have since 2000 when the Tajik Government decided that there were no longer any reasons to consider Tajiks as refugees. Although it does not provide material support, the Government does not hinder the return of its nationals and facilitates documentation. Assistance will continue to aim at self sufficiency and in terms of micro-credits, for example, Tajikistan is a clear success story with almost 100% reimbursement rate. The operation in Tajikistan is thus an integral part of regional operations covering Tajik refugees in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; the close strategic, planning and operational coordination will therefore continue in 2006 (goal 5 of the Agenda for Protection). Furthermore, UNHCR Tajikistan will continue co-ordination activities with UHNCR in countries hosting Tajik Refugees and provide necessary support in the voluntary repatriation process.

UNHCR efforts to develop a functioning asylum regime continued in 2005 and will continue in 2006 and beyond (Goal 1 of the Agenda for Protection). This is a longer term objective and important as the Tajik-Afghan border is among the most important and most sensitive in the region. Close work continues with the State migration service with UNHCR providing advice,

¹ *Please note that the COP is based on the March 2005 situation. The impact of the Uzbek refugee situation is therefore not reflected, and is the subject of on-going review.*

training, participating as an observer in the refugee status determination commission, etc. Nevertheless, figures concerning the revalidation and updating activity in February-March 2004 were 2,535 persons. UNHCR has also followed closely the reported amendment to the refugee law, impressing on the Government its readiness to provide advice but thus far this exercise is still in the planning stages.

It is expected that out of 2500 Afghan refugees in Tajikistan, that approximately 1000 Afghans will remain once resettlement programmes of Canada and the USA for Tajikistan are closed. The Office will explore the option of local integration for this caseload in 2006 (Goals 3 and 5 of the Agenda for Protection). UNHCR Tajikistan considers that a great effort has been made in terms of burden sharing and will impress on the Government the importance of local integration for the remaining caseload. Most of them have been in the country for over a decade, speak the language and have different levels of integration. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account the situation of Tajikistan, a country with limited economy and its own population faces the same needs as the refugee population. Should legal integration of Afghans in Tajikistan become a reality in 2006, UNHCR would support such integration with material assistance, also extending to host communities to avoid tension. It is also foreseen that the participation of UNDP, ILO, the European Union and institutions such as the Aga Khan Development Network as well as donors, will be essential for their political and not only monetary support, for successful local integration.

Regarding resettlement (Goal 3 of the Agenda for Protection), Canada undertook selection missions in 2004 and 2005, and some 1250 refugees were selected. Although most were Afghans, 8 Iranians, and 2 Chinese were also selected. This is an important effort in terms of burden sharing and the Office has gone to extreme lengths to avoid a pull factor. Concerning the voluntary repatriation of refugees (Goal 5 of the Agenda for Protection) in Tajikistan, mainly Afghans, and the Office considers that this solution has run its course. Indeed, in 2004, for example, only 66 Afghan refugees returned to their country. Nevertheless, the Office has made provisions for those who may wish to return in 2006.

The Office will continue to emphasize the need to streamline gender and age and established a working group in early 2005. UNIFEM has been invited to be part of the working group, a work plan is being developed and NGOs have been invited to participate. In accordance with the Plan, the Government will be invited to become part of the working group at a later stage. In meetings with implementing partners gender and age has been emphasized, as has the problem of HIV-AIDS. UNHCR has invited the UNAIDS Representative to address a meeting of its implementing partners to seek practical ways of cooperation.

For 2006, the Office will also promote Tajikistan's accession to the international instruments on statelessness, namely, the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness. This, however, promises to be a longer term affair as the Government has no sense of a problem and sees no urgency in this. It is not at present in the Government's agenda.

UNHCR will continue to work closely with its implementing partners, 9 national and 3 international (ACTED), to improve their work and reporting. UNHCR will also continue to work closely with other UN agencies in the country and actively participate in the UN Country Team and in efforts such as CCA/UNDAF in order to include refugees in them, the Resident Coordinator's Annual Report, etc., as well as in the Security Management Team.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

Based on UNHCR's operational objectives, the overall strategic goals of the 2006 refugee programme in Tajikistan are as follows:

- Successfully conclude the resettlement programme to Canada and the United States, refugees having been selected in 2004 and 2005 the last to depart in early 2006.
- Actively promote the local integration of the remaining Afghan caseload in Tajikistan, some 1000 persons, through a comprehensive plan involving legal integration along with economic support extended to neighboring Tajik communities to avoid the rise of tension that could impair integration, and with the participation of other UN agencies such as UNDP, ILO, perhaps other institutions such as the Aga Khan Development Network, and donors as their diplomatic/political support will be essential to achieve a forthcoming attitude from the Tajik Government.
- Optimize the support for the re-integration of Tajik returnees and update, as required, the plan for the implementation of the cessation clause drawn in 2005, and be prepared to receive new Tajik returnees, although at this point in time an important increase is not foreseen. This strategy will continue to be based on two of the 4Rs global strategy, namely, return and reintegration. Programmes include socio-economic reintegration and wherever necessary, reconciliation activities to bring together returnees and local population, to improve conditions in areas of return and to minimise their migration. Furthermore, UNHCR will continue to monitor protection/restitution of rights of returnees with special focus on women and children. Provide necessary income generation and reintegration activities to ensure sustainability of the return.
- Continue to give priority and actively pursue the establishment of a functioning asylum regime in Tajikistan to ensure the protection of asylum seekers and refugees, including legislation, proper RSD that includes a valid appeals procedure, etc., and which is gender sensitive and promotes awareness of HIV-AIDS.
- Continue to work strengthen the protection capacities of the Tajik Government and NGOs.
- Continue to discuss with the Government ratification of the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction Statelessness.
- Actively participate in the European Union's Border Management for Central Asia (BOMCA) initiative as it deals with the refugee-migration nexus, and to ensure that it adopts a comprehensive approach that includes refugees/asylum seekers and human rights.
- Vigorously promote the mainstreaming of gender and age in all UNHCR programmes and activities. Specific female issues to include for 2006: women in peace building, addressing violence against women and small-scale livelihood support within families. Micro-credit facilities itself provides priority to the needs of widows/women-headed families and families with large number of children. UNHCR will continue to promote the empowerment of women and strengthen awareness of gender equity within the community. Returnee women will continue to be encouraged to take an active part in

the management of returnee affairs. For returnees with special needs, including elderly people, a referral network established in 2004, will continue in 2006, to ensure that special provisions meet their needs, both material and/or physical protection. Gender and age will also be an integral part of the local integration plan drawn up for the remaining Afghan caseload in the country.

- Closely collaborate with partners, to implement a variety of prevention and response activities as outlined under its Plan of Action on SGBV. These activities will include awareness raising in refugee/returnee communities on SGBV, remedial action to be taken through legal mechanisms and sensitisation of local service providers and authorities to the special circumstances and rights of refugees/returnees.
- Actively participate in promoting awareness of HIV-AIDS.
- Continue to develop close relations with the donor community in Dushanbe and carry out information gatherings twice a year in order to keep them abreast of developments in UNHCR's work in the country.
- Foster partnerships with other UN agencies, NGOs, donors, etc., to achieve the objectives outlined above.